



Gearing Up For Your Transitions

Keeping a Health Diary

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By Maia, a college student that finds that keeping a health diary helped her be independent and take over her health care. She used the diary to track her health and to keep her doctors and family informed.

How to keep a Health Diary

A health diary is not a normal diary, nor is it like a care notebook. A health diary is a way for you to keep track of patterns in your health, your diet, and other factors. My first health diary was on a calendar, however, they don't give you a lot of room to write down information. I switched to a notebook, but a date book with one day per page would also work.

Write the days down and keep track of anything new or unusual you might eat. Also keep track of anything else you feel is important to your health. It could be things such as; the time of day that you are feeling sick; when you take your medications; or specific symptoms that you have. How specific you are depends on how much information is important. If you are trying to find the cause of a problem such as an allergy or a medication reaction you will probably need to be very specific. I also use it to help me remember whether or not I took my medicine. It helps to be consistent on what you report in your notebook. It is best to write the note as soon as you notice a symptom or take a medicine. You may not be as accurate if you wait. Using the same descriptions and taking the time to describe things clearly will help you as you refer back to your health diary.

Why is this important?

If, like me, you have problems that can sometimes leave you stumped it is nice to have an idea of any patterns that take place. For example, I began having "unexplained" pain and could not figure out what the cause was. I changed my medications, tried different doses, and nothing changed. I was itchy, sick and uncomfortable. I began keeping track of my health during the changing of my medication. I also tracked my diet, and the times of the day I began to get sick. I was able to chart all three things together.

It seemed that whenever I ate I would then feel sick 1-2 hours later. I showed this information to my doctor, and he referred me to an allergist. The allergist observed my health diary and was able to suggest that I might be allergic to soy, and not milk. This was the opposite of what we believed at the time. I tried each type of milk in a controlled environment, and discovered that I was, in fact, allergic to soy. My health diary really paid off.